

Abstract 703

TITLE: It's in the CARDS (Creating Community, Assessing Risk & Development Skills):
Developing a Culturally Competent, Primary HIV Prevention Program for HIV-negative
And untested Black Men Who Have Sex with Men
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ISSUE: (*Identify the specific problems or needs to be addressed Provide a brief introduction to the prosed topic. Include important background und current information or issues*). As one of only two programs serving a target population estimated to have an HIV seroprevalence rate similar to the 12 percent recently observed during the Young Men's Survey conducted in the city, cultural competence is critical to meeting program process and impact objectives. Further, the city's community planning group stated in its 1996 recommendations that any interventions attempting to effectively serve this population must adequately consider and address the historical legacy and context in which target group members make decisions about sex and HIV risk behaviors.

SETTING: (*Provide information on the geographic locution, description of where the intervention takes place, and intended audience.*) CARDS (Creating community, Assessing Risk & Developing Skills) targets at-risk HIV negative and untested Black men who have sex with men. It is a 4-pronged Health Education/Risk Reduction and Street Outreach prevention program. Outreach in public sex environments (PSEs) and soci al gathering places is used to recruit men for informal discussion groups, workshops, and psychoeducational support group sessions.

Interventions take place in Upper Manhattan and high seroprcvalnce areas of Brooklyn that have historically attracted large numbers of Black gay men and/or men who have sex with men, CARDS 's hallmark has been specially designed playing cards used during informal discussions in PSEs. The playing cards have relevant images of Black gay and bisexual men, and each suit possesses discussion questions that relate to: personal risk -taking, support desired within the community, risk reduction skills, and modes of transmission.

RESULTS: (*Specify results in summary form*). Unable to conduct any support group sessions during the 1st year, CARDS succeeded in conducting concurrent groups during its second year, and over 80% of participants from the first cycles electe d to participate in the second and third of the twelve-week cycles. Six peer facilitators have been trained, and the project has reached over 3500 men in outreach and over 300 men in over 36 discussion sessions.

LESSONS LEARNED: (*Summarize the lessons learned and the implications*). Men in the support groups were unwilling at first to talk about their risk taking behaviors and motivations. (Because of cultural history) they were hesitant to reveal foibles, especially when groups took on a "group-therapy " approach that was seen as "white". Originally limited to just the discussion groups, the strategies used with the playing cards were also subsequently used in support group sessions. This was because these strategies were historically meaningful to parti cipants.

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